



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Federal CARES Act Funding Supports Virginia's Public Libraries WiFi zones, vehicles, and programming strengthen underserved communities.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 4, 2021 (Richmond, Virginia) – Twenty Virginia Public Libraries were awarded federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act funding through the Library of Virginia by the Institute of Museum and Library Services this past fall and have made great use of the funds as the grant period now comes to a close. The libraries were chosen for their service to communities with high rates of unemployment and poverty and low rates of broadband connectivity. Faced with geographic and infrastructure barriers to Internet access, recipient libraries have been careful and innovative stewards of this opportunity, implementing multiple strategies for supporting their communities.

Lonesome Pine Regional Library and Halifax-South Boston Library both purchased vehicles (to be maintained with local funds) to provide outreach services in underserved parts of their communities, providing WiFi zones, programming, and book lending services to those with limited access to libraries.

Almost all of the recipient libraries acquired WiFi hotspots and/or data-enabled laptops or tablets for patrons to check out and use at home, which provided access to at-home learning and online job and government services for those who lacked quality Internet service while libraries were closed to the public because of the pandemic. These items will remain available for checkout post-pandemic. Petersburg Library worked with city government to provide WiFi zones on public transportation. Heritage Public Library collaborated with a local nonprofit partner to provide a parking lot WiFi zone for 24/7 access to a community that previously had no access at all.

Additional innovations include the installation of outdoor lockers for access to library materials and expanding and strengthening WiFi signals in library parking lots for after-hours use. Many libraries subscribed to additional at-home learning and entertainment services during the pandemic, ranging from eBooks and children's content to homework help and crafting programs.

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One goal of CARES Act funding was to make libraries clean and safe. To this end, libraries purchased PPE (personal protective equipment), both for staff and to distribute to the public. Hand sanitizer units, mobile handwashing stations, and the installation of self-checkout stations were common features of the project.

The Library of Virginia thanks the 20 recipient libraries for their diligent management of these resources: Alleghany Highlands Regional Library, Blue Ridge Regional Library, Buchanan County Public Library, Central Virginia Regional Library, Charlotte County Public Library, Cumberland County Public Library, Danville Public Library, Eastern Shore Public Library, Essex Public Library, Galax-Carroll Regional Library, Halifax-South Boston Public Library, Heritage Regional Library, Lonesome Pine Regional Library, Lunenburg Public Library, Massanutten Regional Library, Mecklenburg County Library, Meherrin Regional Library, Pamunkey Regional Library, Petersburg Public Library, and Russell County Library.

To learn more about federal CARES Act funding for libraries, visit www.ims.gov/grants/available/ims-cares-act-grants-museums-and-libraries.

The best way to support YOUR public library is to use it!

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About the Library of Virginia

The Library of Virginia is one of the oldest agencies of Virginia government, founded in 1823 to preserve and provide access to the state's incomparable printed and manuscript holdings. Its collection, which has grown steadily through the years, is the most comprehensive resource in the world for the study of Virginia history, culture, and government with over 129 million items in the collections. The Library also engages the public through in-person and virtual events, education programs, and online resources that reach nearly 4 million individuals each year throughout the commonwealth and beyond.

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